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ABSTRACT

American education is distinctive in the decentralization of its funding and control. Despite recent expansion, the role of the federal government is still restricted to funding and authority in special programs and situations, while both states and localities have authority to define educational purposes, programs, and policies. At all levels of the administrative organization, administrators must consider relationships with groups outside the educational hierarchy, such as parent, community, and legislative bodies. Centralization of authority and funding at the federal level would theoretically reduce the power of these outside groups and increase the importance of relationships within the vertical hierarchy, while simplifying and ritualizing administrative functions. If funding alone or authority alone were centralized, it would appear that many of the same results would occur. The American case is one of fragmented centralization, featuring unrelated federal funding programs processed through several independent channels. The situation seems to lead to a massive middle-level educational bureaucracy, poorly linked with the classroom world below, little integrated around broad educational policies or purposes, organized for the function of reporting to a wide, fragmented funding and control environment, and less and less able to respond to the legitimate authority of local systems. (Author/PGD)

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THE IMPACT OF THE CENTRALIZATION OF EDUCATIONAL FUNDING AND CONTROL ON STATE AND LOCAL ORGANIZATIONAL GOVERNANCE

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The Impact of the Centralization of Educational Funding and Control

State and Local Organizational Governance

Abstract

The actual or potential impact of various forms of organizational centralization of state and school districts is discussed. Special attention is given to the present American system of fragmented centralization--the rise of central controls through funding in a disparate set of specialized areas, without policy integration or the centralization of general authority. It is argued that this system generates, at lower levels, large educational bureaucracies that are increasingly organized around environmental demands and increasingly decoupled from actual educational work.

The Impact of the Centralization of Educational Funding and Control
State and Local Organizational Governance

American education is distinctive in the decentralization of its funding and control. Unlike other nation states, the American central government has little constitutional authority to regulate education, and attempts to construct such authority have historically been defeated. Even a national Office of Education came late and with few powers in the United States. And to this day we do not have a Ministry of Education, unlike most other countries (Ramirez and Rubinson, 1979).

This is not to suggest that education is historically weak or unimportant in the United States. An expanded system of schools, with very high levels of enrollment, developed early -- long before there was much Federal involvement, and considerably before the several states had elaborated their authority in education (Meyer, et al., 1979; Tyack, 1974). This sytem arose through a national, but organizationally decentralized, process -- a series of social movements, rather than a unified bureaucratically controlled set of decisions. The school system grew up in the 18th and 19th centuries with a network of local community and parent controls and constituencies, and only in the latter part of the 19th century did it come to be organized in some part around state - level controls and funds.

This is all quite unusual in the modern world. In most nations, especially the newer ones, education is a central function of the national state: built up in the first place by state decisions and funds; and controlled at many points by national rules (Ramirez and Rubinson, 1979; Meyer, et al., 1977). Organizationally, education in the modern world is a creature of the nation - state. Its central features -- curricula, organizational roles, teacher qualifications, subdivisions of types of schools -- are all usually defined

by a Ministry of Education, which provides a kind of general theory of education underlying the whole system.

Something like this grew up at the state level in the United States, beginning late in the 19th century (for instance, with the passage of compulsory attendance laws between 1870 and 1910), and developing bureaucratically in the 20th century. At the state level, one finds the emergence of some official rules defining curricula, defining teacher qualifications, prescribing the appropriate properties of school buildings, and so on -- much like the rules of national centralization found elsewhere. But even with this, most of the funding for even public primary and secondary education has continued until very recently to come from local sources.

Since World War II, the Federal Government has come to be more involved, but still in a limited way. Only a small fraction of educational funds come from this level. Typically, these funds are attached, not to education in general, but to various special programs, focused on particular kinds of students (the poor, minority groups, the educationally or physically handicapped) or particular schooling situations (impacted areas, segregated schools). And the authority built up has been legitimated, not as an expansion of general Federal educational control, but rather by very special purposes -- most commonly, the restriction of inequalities (Levin 1977; Kirst, 1976).

The point is central to our later discussion: With all the expansion of the Federal role in education in recent decades, this role is still restricted to funding andauthority in various special educational programs and situations. There is no legitimated Federal or national policy covering main educational issues. There are no national curricula, no national tests for admission to

the next level of schooling, no national criteria for achievement, no national definitions of appropriate teaching methods, and no national principles for accrediting schools or teachers. Thus, there is some centralization of finding, and of the parallel organizational controls, but no great expansion of legitimate national responsibility and authority over education, and no set of Federal functionaries who can authoritatively lay out or integrate the basic rules of American education. When the American government reports on education to the world, unlike other states it is in a position of passively reporting what seems to happen in states and localities (UNESCO, 1955-66).

The situation with states and localities is less clear. Both have legitimate authority to define educational purposes, programs, and policies (Kirst, 1970). State authority is in principle extensive, though local decision-making often seems to dominate, at least in the short run. This distinction is less important for our purposes, which are to discuss the impact of such Federal centralization as exists on states and localities.

In this paper, we consider the potential impacts on state and local educational organizations of various forms of centralization. We consider first a hypothetical case -- the organizational consequences which would flow from the centralization of both funding and basic educational authority. Then we consider the potential impacts of two partial forms of centralization, when both have a simple structure: the centralization of funding control but not authority, and the centralization of authority without funds.

Finally, we discuss the American case -- it involves the centralization of funding without the centralization of substantive authority, but in a peculiar way: we call it "fragmented centralization". For the expanded Federal role in the funding of education has not itself been integrated -- no single

Federal office or program brings together the separate funding principles and makes them consistent. Rather, a long series of special controls and funding programs have been created, each with its own purposes and control system, but none part of a larger integrated or unified package (Levin, 1977). Further, this Federal system is not only fragmented at the source, but is also fragmented in its organizational structuring. Some Federal funds flow to the states, and through them down the organizational line (though even here there is much substantive fragmentation, so that different funding programs are unintegrated). Other flow directly to school districts. And still others flow more directly toward schools, or subprograms within schools. (This same fragmentation, incidentally, also describes some of the programs by which the separate states fund districts and schools.)

As we discuss the general organizational impact of centralization, we find ourselves at odds with the main body of literature on related issues. Almost the entire American literature on the subject deals, not with the impact of centralization in general, but with the impact of specific centralizing programs (e.g. Berman and McLaughlin, 1975-78). We have many studies of the impact of Federal desegregation rules, of the impact of programs to aid the youthful poor, of the impact of programs targeted on specific handicapped students, and so on. These studies have a substantive rather than organizational flavor: they are concerned with the great failures in educational implementation, or if implementation has gone on of failures in effectiveness. They only indirectly concern themselves with the impact of the centralization itself as an organizational phenomenon, though many side comments are made on the problem. And they rarely or never discuss the impact of a system of simultaneously operating centralized funding and control programs -- our main problem here. Consequently, we discuss

che problem theoretically, but with less empirical support than might otherwise be the case. And we suggest appropriate research designs with which the problem might be better attacked in the future.

A Theoretical Note on Educational Organizations

The organizational impact of centralization depends heavily on the nature of the organizational domain in which centralization is going on. The centralization of control over automobile production, for instance, should have quite different organizational effects from the centralization of educational control.

The main distinction needed here is between technical organizational domains and institutional ones (Meyer and Rowan 1977, 1978; Meyer, et al., 1979). Technical domains are mainly controlled from the actual work or output side -- market or other specification are imposed on products. Whatever organizational controls exist must in one way or another come to terms with, and be partly justified in terms of, properties of actual work or its outputs. Institutional domains are those in which environmental forces specify work forms or categorical processes as proper and legitimate, and provide funds in terms of the propriety in institutional terms of the general activities and categories of activities. Thus, centralization in a technical domain can effectively occur only so long as some central control is coordinated with actual output properties; effective centralization in automobile production, for instance, usually means the centralized coordination and control over at least some of the properties of the automobiles produced.

In institutional domains, this technical constraint is weakened -- and education is an excellent example. Centralized control means the central definition of some of the legitimate categories of activity -- it does not necessarily imply the central control over properties of the actual student outputs. Nor

does it necessarily imply the central control over the actual work processes affecting these outputs -- in institutionalized settings like education, work processes are frequently delegated beyond the control of the formal organization itself.

This general property of educational systems is sometimes called "loose coupling" -- the tendency of educational organizations to disconnect policies from outcomes, means from ends, and structures or rules from actual activity (Weick, 1976; March and Olsen, 1976; March, 1978). Educational organizations can be centralized around rule systems that are unimplemented, or would be disastrous or inconsistent if implemented. This occurs in technical organizational domains too, but is much more likely to create difficulties in the actual work processes or outputs that are brought under organizational control.

It is thus important to remember that educational systems can more easily adapt to centralization because of this general property: they can more easily deal with impossible or inconsistent centralizing constraints by the avoidance of implementation, the ritualization of implementation or evaluation or control, and so on (Meyer and Rowan 1977, 1978). One consequence of centralization in education, for instance, can simply be the further decoupling of the formal authority or rule system and the actual activities going on in schools and classrooms.

A second loosely-coupled property of institutionalized organizational systems like education must also be kept in mind. In these organizations, high proportions of administrative or organizational management activity are disconnected with the actual work activities of schools, but are closely connected with the political and institutional structures of the environment (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). Since technical work is managed below the level of inspection

of the organization's structure, much or most management and organizational activity is free to adapt to changing environmental constraints. This kind of organization tends to be closely linked to the environment, for the environmental social and authority system is the source of the legitimacy and resources required for organizational action -- and not through market processes involving output inspection, but through direct dependence relationships. School and district administrators must be on good terms with their political and institutional constituencies: output issues are much less critical. No matter how good an instructional job a school does, if it is disaccredited by the district, state, or Federal rule systems, much trouble ensues. And such disaccreditation ordinarily has nothing to do with actual output measures, but rather arises from formal institutionalized rules defining proper organization, procedure, and so on.

Therefore, in institutionalized organizational systems like education, administrative functions ordinarily involve less the management of technical work than the management of relations with the environment and conforming to institutionally required rituals (see the papers in M. Meyer, et al., 1978).

THE IMPACT OF UNITARY INTEGRATED CENTRALIZATION

Suppose, in this kind of organizational system, control and funds were completely centralized to the Federal level, with a national curriculum, and nationally-defined structure, and with autonomous local and state controls and funds completely eliminated. This would be a system much like those that prevail in many countries. What organizational impact on the lower levels (state, district, and school) would we expect.

Compared with a hypothetical system in which there was little higher-level control of any kind (i.e., one-room schools responsible to the local community

only or to parents only) the centralized system would clearly involve a great expansion of administrators and administrative levels. There would be school administrators, district administrators, state administrators, and Federal administrators, with some intervening layers of supervisors or inspectors: each layer would be directly and solely responsible to the one above it and would have authority and control over the one below it. The result would be a simple chain-of-command organizational structure, as many countries have.

But the present system, which is by no means completely decentralized, is the relevant comparison. And it is not clear that simple centralization would increase administrative activity over the present system, in which each educational level has to maintain administrative linkages, not only with the level above it, but with many lateral groups. Teachers in the United States deal, not only with the principal, but with parents and community. Principals also deal with parents and community, often extensively, not only with the district office. Superintendents deal with school boards and the community. And state education functionaries deal with legislatures, interest groups, and so on (Kirst, 1970; Wirt, 1975). The present political culture of American education is filled primarily with such lateral relationships, lateral groups have both legitimate authority and funding power in the system.

All this structure would be undercut by a shift to complete centralization of authority and funds. And the administrative problem at each educational level would be greatly simplified. This is especially true given the institutionalized character of educational organization, in which primary administrative problems involve less the coordination of work activity than effective linkage with the institutionally authoritative (and funding) environment: Thus:

> Proposition A: Complete centralization of funding and control in American education in the hands of an integrated Federal authority would reduce the size of the administrative component at each lower level.

But not only size would be reduced. The administrative function would become directed primarily toward the management of conformity at lower levels and the maintenance of conformity with higher ones. Lateral relations would be of lesser importance. Several consequences follow:

> Proposition B: Complete centralization would increase authority and hierarchical relations throughout the system, and would decrease the organizational extent and importance of lateral relations.

> Proposition C: Complete centralization would lower the number and complexity of environmental relations for each level, and would therefore lower (independent of size) the organizational differentiation or complexity found at each level.

Thus, one of the present characteristics of American school district and state organizations is the small number of administrators who have direct line authority and the large number of administrators and units with specialized functions (either in dealing with special aspects of the environment, or with special educational issues). (See Scott, et al., 1976.) This balance would radically change with centralization. With more line administrators, and fewer differentiated functions, organizational integration would be increased, both vertically and horizontally. At present, vertical relationships in American education are weakened by the fact that each level in the system has autonomous lateral relationships, and so evaluation and inspection are very weak (Dornbusch and Scott, 1975). The coordination of lateral relationships among administrative units is attenuated by the same factors (see Rowan 1979; Davis, et al., 1977).

> Proposition D: Complete centralization would increase vertical integration (through inspection and evaluation) and the horizontal integration of each level (through authoritative administrative coordination).

Incomplete Unitary Centralization

Suppose the creation of an integrated Federal authority and funding base did not replace, but was added on to, the present system, with its authority and funding bases operating simultaneously at several levels.

Some of the propositions above might still hold: vertical authority relations would be enhanced (Proposition B), and vertical integration might also be increased (Proposition D, part 1). But the other effects would probably not occur. Administrative size and complexity at any level (Propositions A and B) would probably increase -- this form of centralization would add complexity to the relationships of each level with its environment. And integration at any level (Proposition D, part 2) would be made more difficult, not less difficult.

Obviously, the overall organizational effects of a unitary centralization depend very heavily on the extent to which authority and funds are completely centralized, and on what other sources of power are left in the system.

Effects of Centralization on Teaching Work

We have considered above mainly organizational effects, not instructional ones, of centralization. But clearly effective centralization would tend to standardize curricula and instructional practices in schools, and tend to immunize these aspects of teaching from the variance introduced by local controls, tastes, and so on.

Standardization would also result from other than organizational processes. The legitimation of a unified central authority would involve a reduction in the puralism of American educational culture -- the collection of nationwide elites and ideas about education that clearly plays an extremely important role in the present system. At present, this culture -- which seems to manage the system more than organizational decisions do (Tyack and Hansot, 1979; Meyer, et al., 1978) -- is quite diversified, as educational ideas and ideologies flow through a decentralized cultural marketplace. Centralized authority would turn the intellectuals and innovators and educational cultural authorities, who now

compete in a dispersed market, more into competitors for the status of advisors to the prince. Even now, in American education, the social right and capacity to give testimony to the Congress becomes an increasing source of status and legitimacy for putative innovators and advisors.

Research Designs on Unitary Centralization

Little unitary centralization has gone on at the Federal level in the United States. But it would be possible to investigate effects with the following strategies:

1. Comparative cross-sectional studies could examine variations in lower level organizational structures across countries, to see if they are affected by centralization.

2. Comparative longitudinal studies could investigate changes in lower-level organization as they are produced by centralization.

3. Comparisons could also be made among American States, which vary considerably in their degree of unitary centralization, to look for effects on district and school organization. Some cross-sectional data which would lend themselves to this kind of study are already available (Abramovitz and Tenenbaum, 1978). But longitudinal studies -- looking for the impact of increases over time in state centralization -- would be highly desirable. Of course, state studies could only really investigate the impact of partial centralization, since rarely in America does the state assume such a commanding role as to eliminate autonomous authority and funds at lower levels. The most highly centralized state -- Hawaii -- should obviously be given special research attention.

FRAGMENTED CENTRALIZATION: TWO SIMPLE CASES

Suppose only one of the two basic forms of educational power-- authority and funding -- is centralized, with the other left decentralized. What conseqquences does this have? The question is of some practical importance, because in some ways this describes recent changes in the American case. Federal funding has increased, but there has been little shift in legitimate authority over

central educational issues to the Federal level. In reality, though, the American case is more complex, as we will discuss below.

Centralized authority, but at least partially decentralized funding, is a relatively common situation in other countries. Given the general character of educational organization, with its inclination to become loosely-coupled in the relation between organizational authority and actual work patterns, the consequences of this situation are fairly clear.

> Proposition E: The centralization of authority but not funds increased the decoupling of authority and actual practice. Practice is organized in varying ways, depending on funds, but is integrated in a common categorical scheme built up by the centralized authority.

This situation is readily visible in the American states, many of which have built up a unified educational authority without complete control over funds. In this situation, all schools must formally meet standard criteria. All high schools, for instance, adopt the same category scheme (all offer, for instance, a 12th grade, almost all offer a long list of standard courses, almost all have the basic curricula, and almost all the teachers meet state criteria). But they vary greatly in practice, depending on student constituencies (recall that these schools are highly dependent on the local community) and resources. Some of the 12th grades are actually doing 10th grade work. Some of the schools have teachers who are vastly better qualified in their subjects. Some of the Chemistry courses are by no stretch of the imagination real Chemistry. This situation is even more common in developing countries.

Nevertheless, the simple centralization of formal authority may produce some of the administrative consequences indicated in our earlier propositions. The weakening of local authority probably simplifies and reduces administrative burdens and organizational complexity. Conceivably horizontal integration at each

level is also increased, though we have argued that vertical integration is if anything lowered (Proposition E): in a system with centralized authority, it becomes crucial to minimize information about local nonconformity and variability, and vertical relations tend to be ritualized.

Consider now the other alternative -- the centralization of funding without authority, as in the American Federal case, and as in the earlier history of some of the states. Here we have the ritualization of local authority in meaningless policy decisions, policies that cannot be implemented, and so on. And we have the rise of what may broadly be called the accountants -- the personnel who manage the funding and reporting relations with central power. The central functionaries do not have the direct authority to set policies, and so justify their expenditures through narrower technical rules. Sometimes these are budgetary rules that restrict the possibilities for expenditure. Sometimes they are accompanied by bureaucratic educational rules -- e.g., technical definitions as to what is and is not properly fundable schooling. And sometimes they are accompanied by technical definitions of appropriate educational outputs: (a) Thus the American emphasis on the proper accounting of attendance, since funds are dependent upon ADA, and the ignoring of the character of attendance (which has produced the most interesting types of work-study, continuation, and alternative school arrangements for students not actually present in school); (b) and thus the frequent American emphasis on some kind of technical evaluational data on student outputs -- data that can support the justificatory needs of central functionaries who do not have authority to operate on their own judgements (McLaughlin 1975; David, 1978); (c) and thus the American emphasis on counting graduates, and treating dropout as a uniformly negative characteristic. Thus:

Proposition F: The centralization of funding but not authority generates organizational controls through accounting and statistical mechanisms. Administrative work is deflected from policy and authority and toward accounting systems.

It is difficult to discuss other effects of funding centralization. Much depends on the way the funds are organized, and the criteria by which they are allocated. In general, we may suppose that the centralization of funding cuts off power relations between each of the lower organizational levels and its lateral constituencies, and thus lowers the need for administrative expansion to coordinate with them. Thus, many of our initial propositions (A through D) may hold.

Research Designs

Here again, it would be useful to engage in cross-national longitudinal studies, or in studies of American states over time. The states differ greatly in their relative centralization of funding and of formal educational authority. And there have been many changes over time on such dimensions. The opportunity for time-series studies of the consequences of these changes for local and school organization is substantial.

FRAGMENTED CENTRALIZATION: THE AMERICAN FEDERAL CASE

The American case is still more complex. There has been relatively little centralization of direct educational authority. There has been more funding centralization, but even this has been highly fragmented. There is no system for the integrated disbursal of Federal educational funds, and these funds are organized in terms of disbursal through varying organizational mechanisms. The important points are two: First, there are many unrelated funding programs. Second, funds from these programs go through the system of American education through different channels. Some funds go rather directly to schools, and

directly undercut the intervening authority of districts and states. Other funds go to districts on a rather direct basis. Still other go to states, and are allocated to lower levels through state authority. It may be said in brief that the system is an organizational theorist's nightmare, and something of a bad dream for administrative practitioners, who must send and receive a blizzard of reports to and from distinct reporting agencies. The practical literature is filled with complaints, and especially the state organizations have risen up to resist various aspects of the "Federal reporting burden." We may assume that in the future at least one aspect of organization integration in the system will be enhanced -- that increasingly, Federal educational funds will flow through the states, and not directly to subunits. But even this is not entirely clear.

The organizational literature is clear on the main structural consequences of such a system, when contrasted with a more integrated one:

> Proposition G: Administrative size and complexity will expand in subunits as those subunits are exposed to an increasing variety of funding and authority relations with their environments (Emery and Trist 1965, Terreberry, 1968; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978; Udy, 1970; Deal, et al., 1977).

And given the inclination of educational organizations to decouple structural levels from each other, and from work activity:

> Proposition H: Subunit horizontal integration and internal coordination will decline with an increased variety of distinct funding and authority relations with the environment (Meyer and Rowan, 1977).
>
> Proposition I: Subunit organization will shift in structure from forms designed to coordinate work to those differentiated to match the environmental funding structure (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978; Thompson, 1967; Deal et al., 1977).

Thus the structure of state Departments of Education should increasingly reflect the structure of federal funding programs, not the exigencies of educational coordination. So also with the structure of school district organizations (see Rowan, 1977). So also, even, with schools. And the capacity for internal linkage should decline (Davis, et al., 1977; Rowan, 1979).

But this holds true of the capacity for general vertical integration too, especially given educational loose-coupling:

> Proposition J: Faced with diverse external authorities and funding sources, subunits organize around reporting requirements and lose their more general capacity to exercise authority over their subordinate levels.

Further, this general inclination is increased by the following fact: The unintegrated system of Federal controls leaves open much room for internal inconsistency in its requirements, and also leaves open room for inconsistency with state or local requirements. Thus:

> Proposition K: Vertical and horizontal loose coupling is increased as environmental groups and funding agencies pose conflicting and inconsistent requirements (Meyer and Rowan, 1978).

Consider the practical situation of a school principal or superintendent. The state will provide extra funds for a special program for handicapped students: the Federal government will provide further funds if there is no special program (i.e., for mainstreaming). The parents insist that funds be managed equitably within the school and district: but both state and federal governments provide special funds which must be spent only within a few schools, or even for a few students within a school. Or more simply: the reporting and budgetary deadline for Programs A, B, and C, is July 1. For Programs D, E, and F, it is February 1. Yet each budget and each report must be made in awareness (and

reported awareness) of each other budget or report. And each budget and report must be organized in terms of different, and sometimes conflicting, categories.

What is the administrator to do? The answer is simple: have a differentiated subunit for each funding or authority program, let these subunits report as best they can in conformity with requirements, avoid having the subunits brought in contact with each other (so as to avoid explicit conflict or inconsistency), and remain in ignorance of the exact content of the various programs, reports, and budgets (so as to maintain a posture of incompetence, rather than one of dishonesty). The ideal administrator, in this situation, will be a picture of ineptitude: ignorant of the most obvious aspects of the reality nominally under supervision, and tolerant of the most aggregious mistakes. This posture will have the additional organizational benefit of confirming to funding and program officers at higher levels the importance of their function, the urgency of their work, and the desparate need of the educational world beneath them for their reforms.

This is the world suggested by the propositions above. And the literature is full of suggestions that it is not so far from reality. The old line authoritative and charismatic local administrator is pretty much gone, and replaced by administrators skilled in what might be called negotiation (Tyack and Hansot, 1979). The funds provided by centralized programs are indeed spent, but much question arises about whether the programs have in fact been implemented (Berman and McLaughlin, 1975-78; McLaughlin, 1975; Levin, 1977). Reporting and evaluation requirements are ritualized (David, 1978) and often evaded entirely.

At the state level, we have fragmentation, isomorphic with the fragmentation above. Large state staffs are differentiated, not only around state policy,

but around Federal program structures, just as with districts. Large proportions of State Department of Education employees are funded with Federal money (as with district and schools, too).

Conflict and Dissatisfaction

In discussing the impact of centralization, we have not considered its impact on stress in the organizational system -- perhaps the most common variable conventionally discussed.

Clearly, fragmented centralization, if applied to a technical domain of organizational life, results in much stress and conflict. As disconnected central controls are imposed on the automobile manufacturers, for instance, a great deal of stress occurs: manufacturers must satisfy consumer demands for cars that start, but also pollution rules that insure that they will not start smoothly; EPA rules about gasoline mileage, but also tastes for large and heavy cars; customer desires for attractive and efficient interiors, but also various cumbersome safety rules.

But in education, or other institutionalized domains, it is not so clear. None of the rules really specify and control in detail actual work processes, and almost none looks at the properties of the actual student outputs. Conflicting and inconsistent environmental demands can therefore be simultaneously incorporated, so long as adequate organizational buffering (e.g., lack of communication) is maintained. Loose coupling, thus, is an organizational solution to institutional inconsistency in the educational system. An automobile manufacturer cannot satisfy the government by reporting that his cars have had fifteen units of instruction in mileage, and satisfy the consumer by a special program in heaviness and solidity of construction. A school can, by and large, do so. It can incorporate in its formal curriculum topics that -- if properly covered --

would consume much more than the school day, just as we professors ordinarily incorporate exaggerated depictions of the work in our formal syllabi. In a system in which actual work processes and products are institutionally invisible, and presented to the world as a set of myths and rituals (Meyer and Rowan, 1977, 1978), inconsistency is often easy to deal with. Any effective school administrator can honestly assure some constituencies that the school has sex education (as a regular part of family life, or even biology, instruction), and can assure other constituencies that it doesn't. So also with special versus mainstreamed education. Or separate and funded programs for minority students, and yet completely integrated ones.

There are clearly limits here, and sometimes -- reality in the classroom entirely aside -- there are direct conflicts between environmentally required category and accounting systems. But these can often be resolved by the retention of buffered parallel category structures (e.g., vocational and college preparatory curricula with the same formal course titles), or by the maintenance of several sets of accounting books simultaneously for use in response to different environmental demands.

Indeed, we can go further: whatever problems are created by the system of fragmented centralization may be overshadowed by the organizational resources created by the same system. Each organizational functionary now has additional constituents to play off against each other: the special education supervisor can tell the superintendent that the unsatisfactory aspects of the program result from Federal requirements, and can so put off community and parent constituents. The state functionaries can increase their leverage over the locals by claiming that Federal coercion is responsible for the new pressures. And the locals, even, can resist various state efforts on the same grounds. Once we see educational

organization as decoupled from educational work and outputs, it is a kind of shadow structure: any given situation can be seen as having only one technical reality, but it can have many shadows. Thus:

> Proposition L: Fragmented centralization does not, overall, tend to increase conflict and reduce satisfaction in the organizational system.

What, though, about the components of the system that are not organizational -- the collection of parent and community and interest group constituencies that surrounds the organization. In many respects, their power to penetrate the organization is reduced as centralization occurs. We may expect the following general consequences:

> Proposition M: Fragmented Federal centralization decreases the power and satisfaction of those constituencies organized primarily at lower levels of the system (i.e., parents and communities), but may increase the power and satisfaction of those constituencies that can mobilize at the Federal level.
>
> Proposition N: Fragmented Federal centralization increases the inclination of constituencies to mobilize at the Federal level.

Some Additional Speculations on Effects of the Present System

The present system of control and funding in American education is quite distinctive, and a number of disconnected ideas about its effects may be worth noting:

1. Effects on the political culture of American education: A) Charisma: As with all systems in which funding is more centralized than authority, charisma tends to be drained from the lower levels, but not to shift to higher ones. Local and state administrators are increasingly in the position of budgeting functionaries, not educational leaders. But the Federal functionaries do not gain much generalized authority -- they are in the position of controlling special funds and programs. This is part of a historic pattern in which patterns of

attributed "educational leadership" have flowed up and out of the educational organizational system itself, and have come to be located in external rational elite groups and figures. The heroes of American education are neither the old local and state administrators (Tyack and Hansot, 1979), nor the new Federal officers. They are now outside the organization almost entirely -- intellectuals and reformers and professors with missions of reform, and often with justification phrased in terms of research (sometimes research not yet done) or scientific authority (Tyack, et al., 1979). Some recent superintendents of schooling in America, for instance, have included James Conant, James Coleman, and Coons and Sugarman.

This issue can be studied by simply coding summaries of outgoing national educational discussions over the last century to trace evolving centrality in leadership. Our argument here is that the shifts upward in funding but not authority build up support for external charisma. We suppose that authority in the present system tends to shift outward into the hands of the intellectual and ideological controllers of national educational fashion cycles.

B) The authority of parents and community: Clearly the changes we have been discussing lower the power of the local community over its schools. The locals are put in the position of having to support their schools in efforts to get more state and federal funds, not in the position to exercise control (Deal, et al., 1977). Surveys over time should show this effect.

But beyond this, local power changes its character: we expect that local groups increasingly mobilize, not around local issues, but around evolving Federal controls and national fashions. Movements for competency-based instruction or basic education, for instance, should occur equally where there has been no local test score problem and where there has. As the system centralizes, the bases for mobilization within it centralize too.

2. Effects of expanding state control of Federal flow-through funds: There is some evidence that states have increasingly gained control over the internal management of Federal funds. If this occurs, the effects internal to each state may be a little similar to those we discussed under the heading of unitary centralization. State power and authority are increased, and the pluralism of the environment around each district decreases (and with it internal administrative complexity).

3. Effects of accountant dominance: Because Federal control takes the form of fundings, rather than authority, its justifications tend to be put in accounting or test-scores or evaluation research terms. And its impact on lower levels has this character too. This means that at all levels, we expect to find the increasing dominance of technicians -- accountants, evaluators, testers, and so on -- rather than broader educational authorities (David, 1978; Kirst, 1977). Research could study this question in a number of ways: (a) What kinds of people, with what kinds of backgrounds, rise in the system? And how is this changed? (b) What types of roles expand most at lower levels, and how has this changed? (c) To what extent have technocratic ideas about management (e.g., PPBS, MIS, etc.) come to dominate over substantive ones? (d) How have the types of documentation emitted by local and state educational organizations changed (e.g., the types of paperwork produced)? (e) What types of information are gathered in the system, and for what reporting purposes? And how has this changed?

Research Designs on Fragmented Centralization

In discussing earlier forms of centralization, we emphasized longitudinal studies of states, and comparative studies of national societies. But here we are dealing with educational changes that have been going on at the national

level in the United States. Research should attack these issues directly. We need longitudinal studies of local and state organizational structure (administrative size, administrative complexity, organization around external funding sources, horizontal coordination in policy terms, and vertical sytems of control and inspection) as they have responded to Federal funding expansion, and to some extent Federal authority expansion in specialized areas. Independent variables would be properties of the Federal systems, with some controls on state and local structure and resources. Dependent variables would be such local and state properties as those listed above. It is absolutely crucial that such studies should be longitudinal in character, to capture the critical variation in Federal structure and control. Derivative studies of which try to get at the same thing by looking at varying relations between the Federal system and particular states are open to too many methodological objections. The main variance we are after is that occasioned by changes in the Federal system over time, and that is what should be investigated.

Of course, it is also possible to study states longitudinally -- many of them have changed in ways paralleling the Federal changes, with fragmented budgetary allocation systems and hosts of special programs. The question here would be the effect such changes have on local organizational patterns (see Rowan, 1977 for one example).

But another kind of research should receive some priority here too: simple descriptive studies of the overall organizational situation. Just what types of fundings and controls from the environment (especially the Federal and state organizations) do typical districts operate with? And how, administratively, do they organize in relation to these controls? How do state Departments of Education organize to deal with the Federal Government? And exactly what

funding and control linkages do they have? The present situation is an organizational mess, and poses considerable problems for clear description. We know, from impressionistic evidence, that large numbers of educational administrators at all levels now deal primarily with one or another programmatic connection with the funding environment: often their job titles reflect such linkages. Even individual schools have special administrators for special externally-funded programs -- the principal no longer always does the job alone. The same thing is true even more at district and state levels. The descriptive question is: overall, what does this system look like?

CONCLUSIONS

We have been working with speculations that at best have some theoretical backing, and only infrequently with evidence. As we noted at the beginning, this results from the overemphasis in research on the rise of specific centralizing fundings or controls, rather than on the organizational system as a whole. In this paper, we have been concerned with the organizational complexities introduced in the overall system by the present world of fragmented controls. The problem is simple: suppose we know that each of ten Federal programs standing along could introduce happiness and virtue in each of ten domains in American schools (types of students, special content areas, etc.). Even then we must also consider what the organizational introduction of all ten programs might do.

A second research problem exists: the moralistic research pressure for contemporaneity builds in a bias against longitudinal organizational studies. Why study the past when Congress has just funded a new program which will save educational souls? Why not study the new program and its impact? The studies advocated here take a more reflective view. They compare the past organizational

evolution of the system in response to various types of centralization over time. They cover long periods of time during which crucial changes have gone on. And in some cases, they compare states or even countries to get at the crucial variation.

In any event, we have argued here that fragmented centralization in American education has in each subunit level expanded administrative size, increased differentiation and made it more isomorphic with external structures and less with internal needs, and lowered vertical and horizontal internal coordination on substantive educational matters. It has, we believe, generated a massive middle-level educational bureaucracy, poorly linked with the classroom world below, little integrated around broad educational policies or purposes, and organized around reporting to a fragmented wider funding and control environment. And, we argue, it has become less and less able to respond to the local systems of control -- one of the main loci of legitimated educational authority in the country. Organizationally, the system would be improved either by more authoritative and integrated centralization (which would explicitly undercut the authority of lower levels), or by a shift in funding organization back to a more local or state system. In the absence of these changes, a simple attempt to integrate and coordinate programs and funding at the Federal level might in itself lower some of the administrative and reporting burdens.

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